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(54) **ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM AND METHOD**

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CPC **F02C 6/16** (2013.01); **F05D 2260/12**
(2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC **F02C 6/16**; **F05D 2260/42**
See application file for complete search history.

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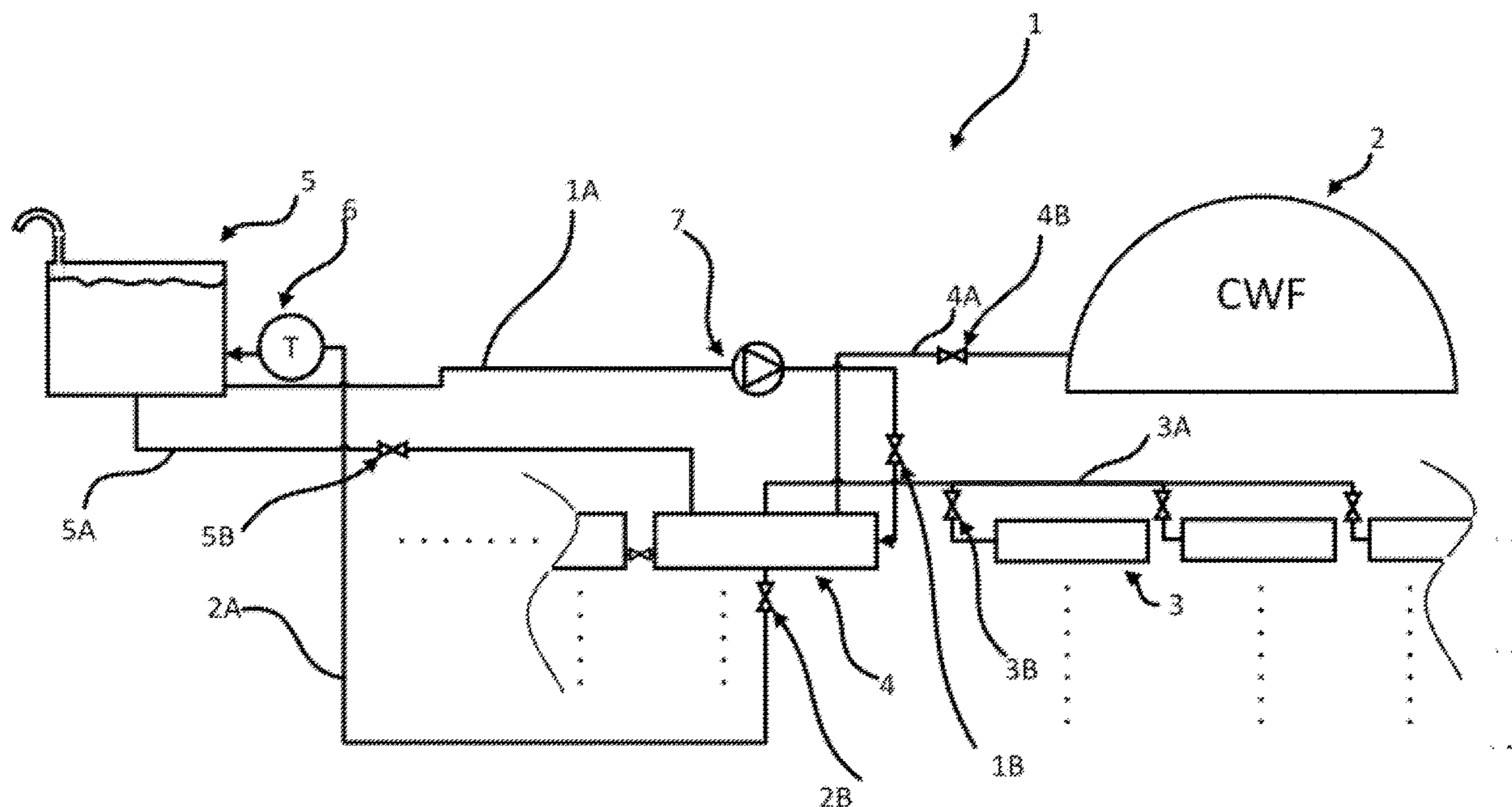
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

An energy storage system has a pressure vessel that is exposed to ambient temperatures and that contains a working fluid which is condensable at ambient temperatures (CWF); a liquid reservoir in communication with one of the vessels and containing a liquid that is unvaporizable in the reservoir and in the vessel; and apparatus for delivering the liquid from the reservoir to the vessel. The CWF is compressible within the vessel upon direct contact with the liquid and is storable in a liquid state after being compressed to its saturation pressure. In a method, at least some of the liquid located in the vessel is propelled by the CWF towards a turbine to produce power. In one embodiment, a module has a first vessel having at least four ports, a second vessel at ambient temperatures, and a flow control component operatively connected to a corresponding conduit for selectively controlling fluid flow.

20 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets



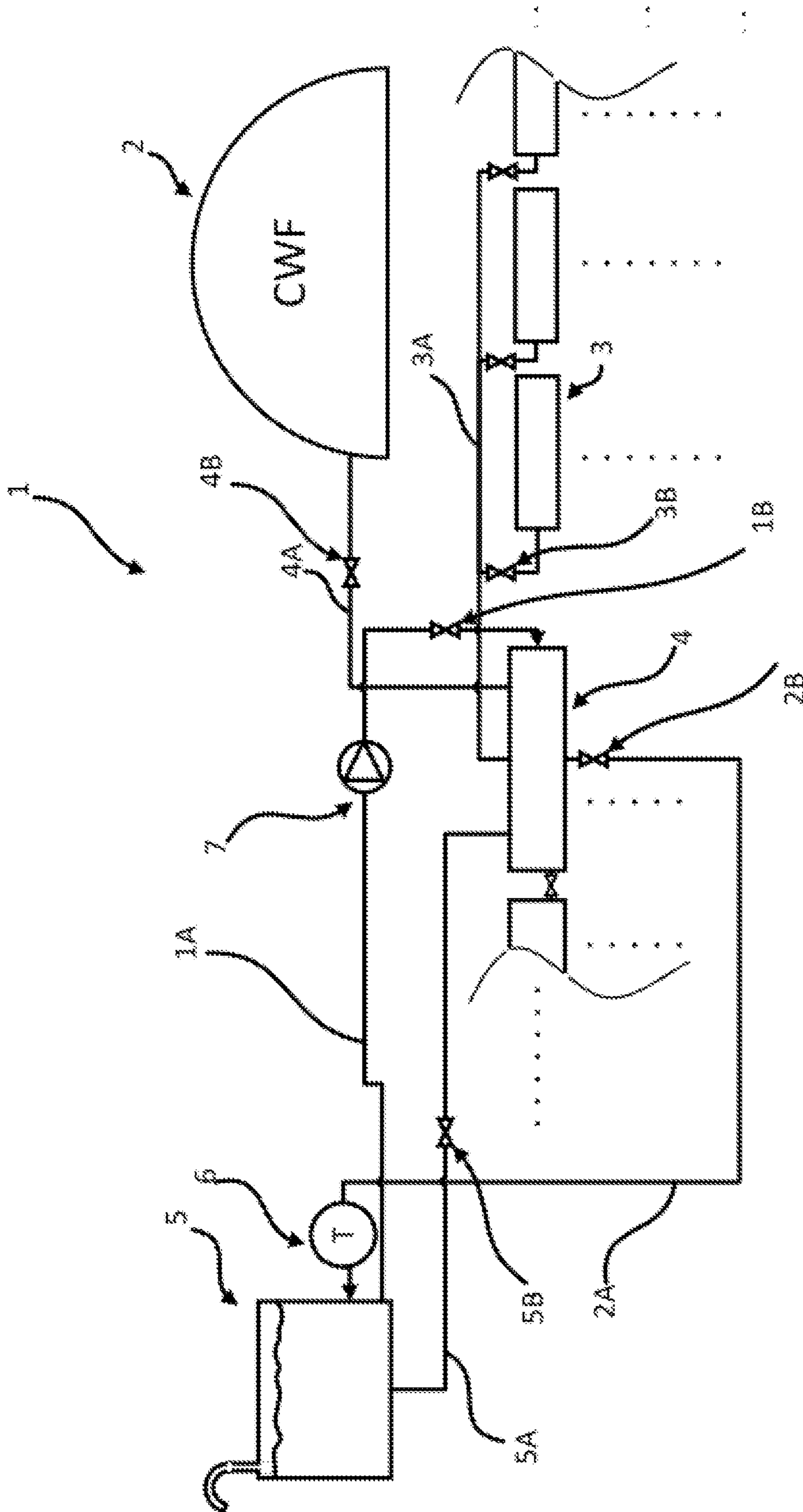


Fig. 1

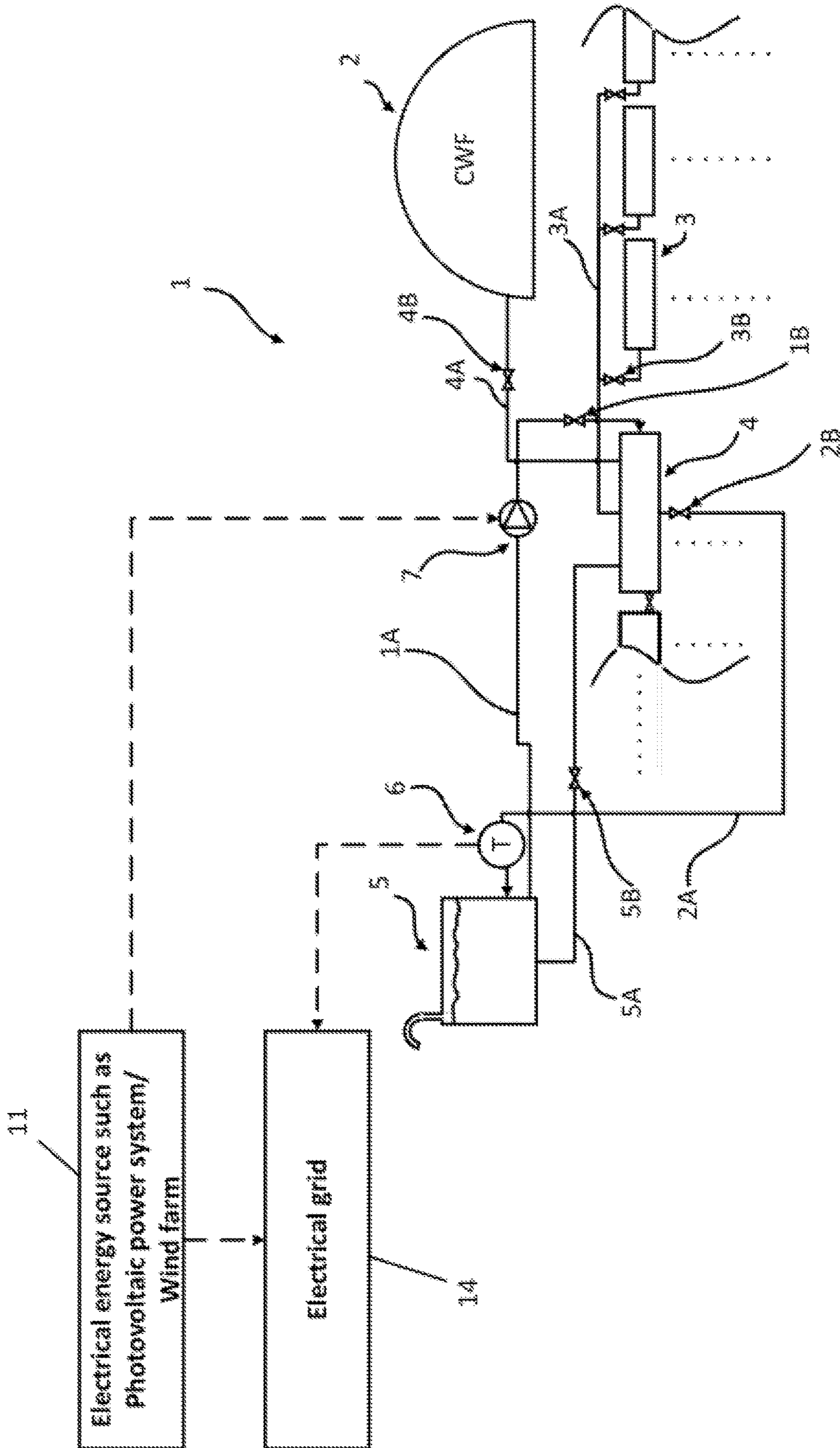


Fig. 2

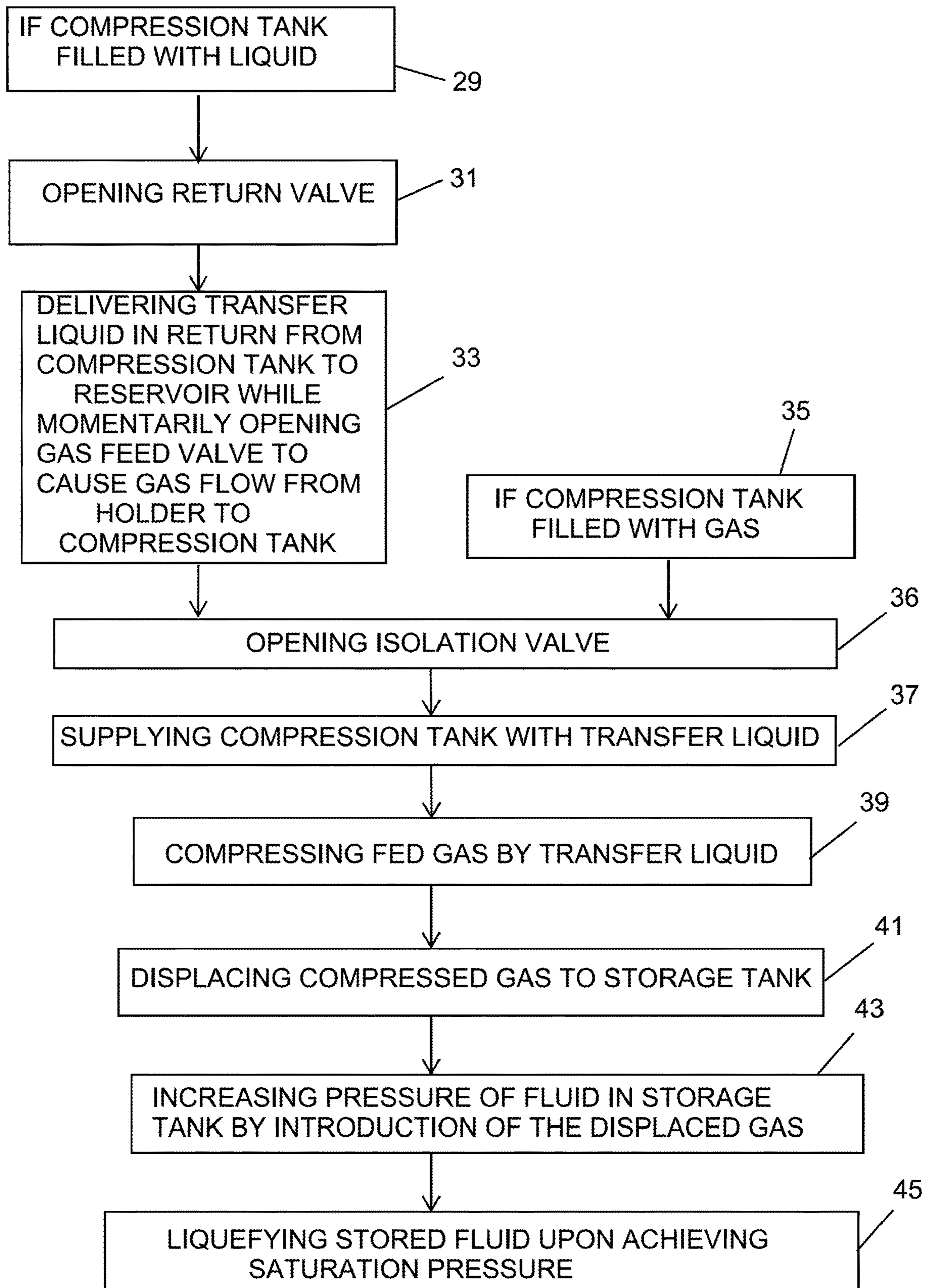


Fig. 3

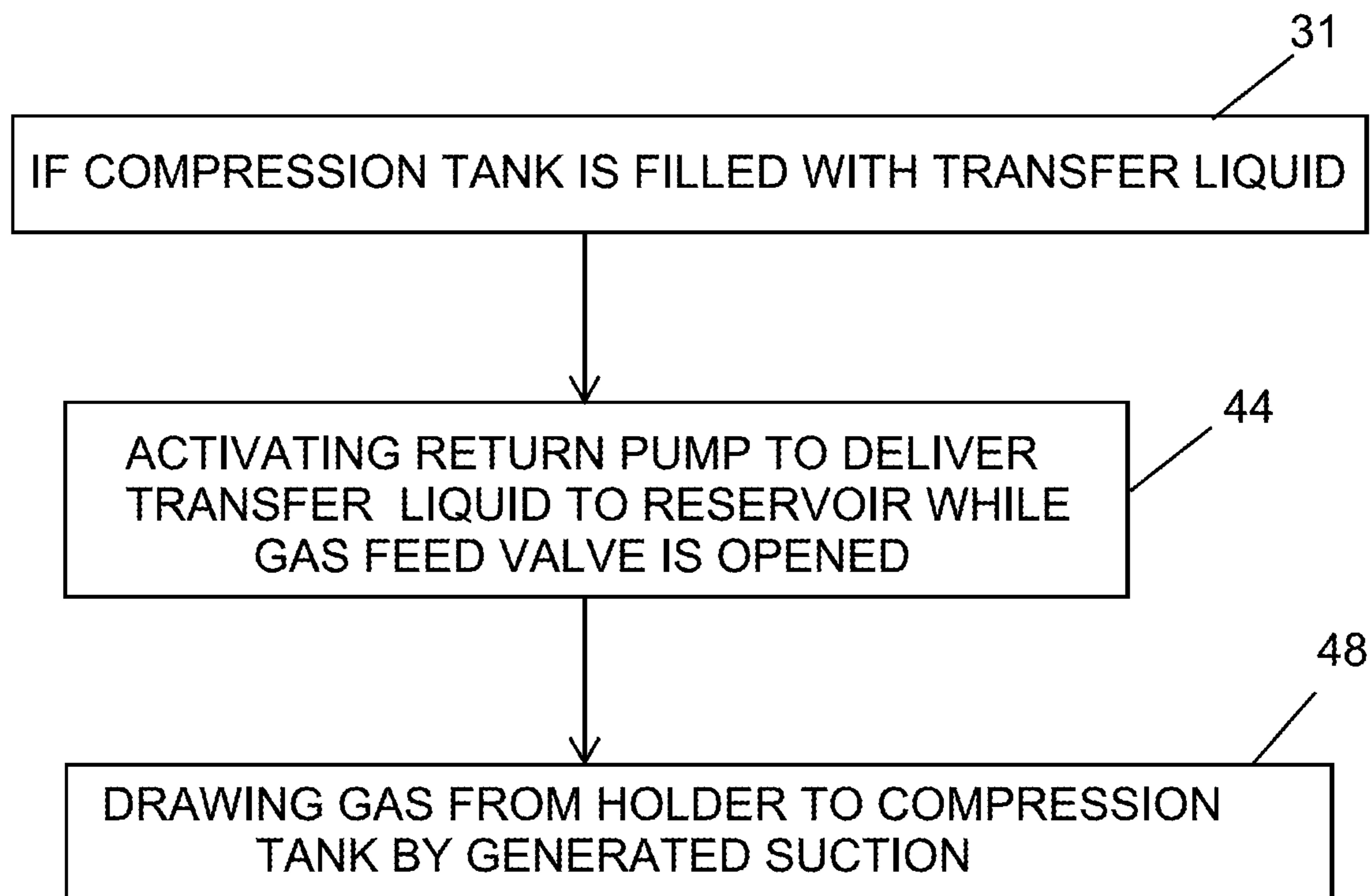


Fig. 4

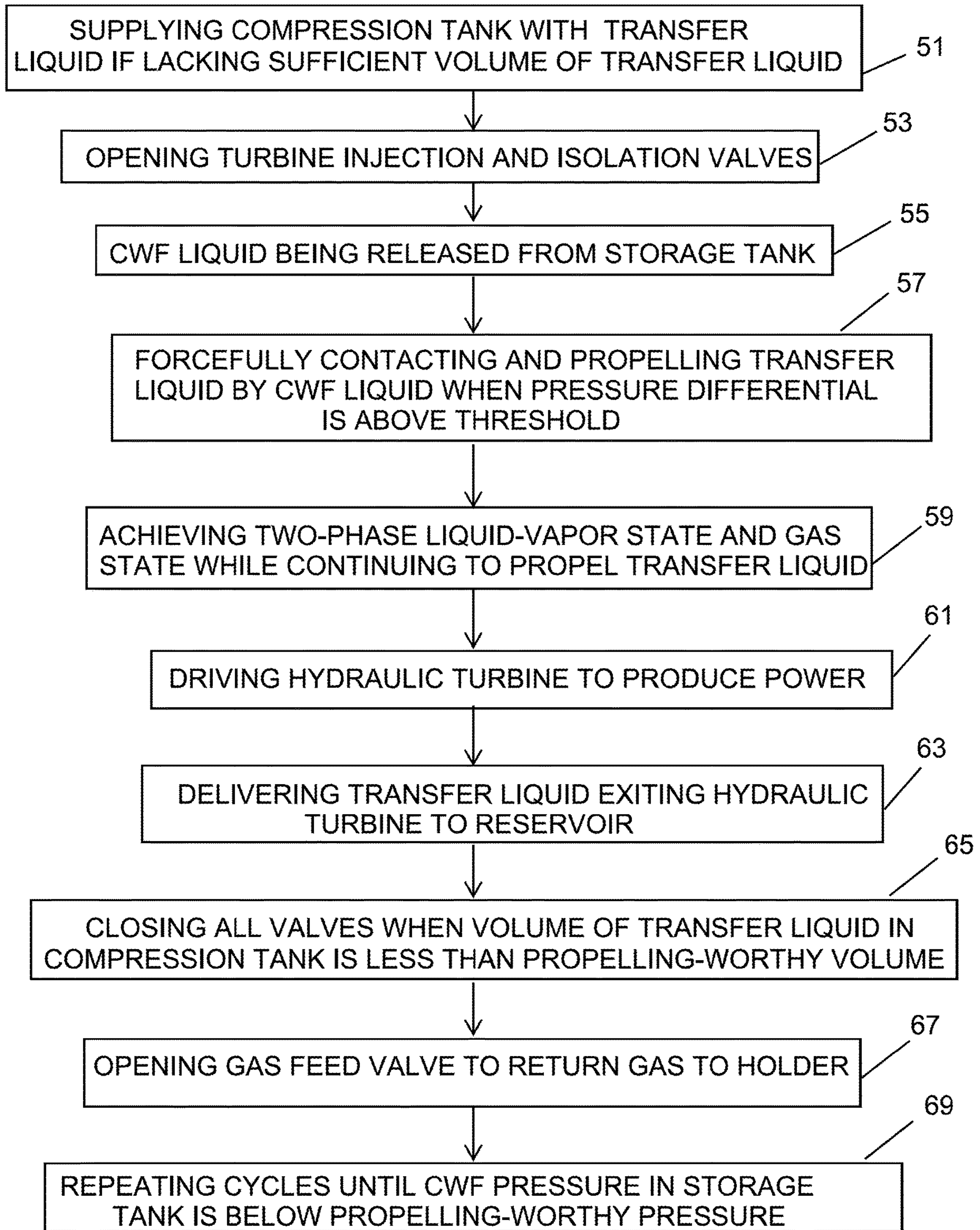


Fig. 5

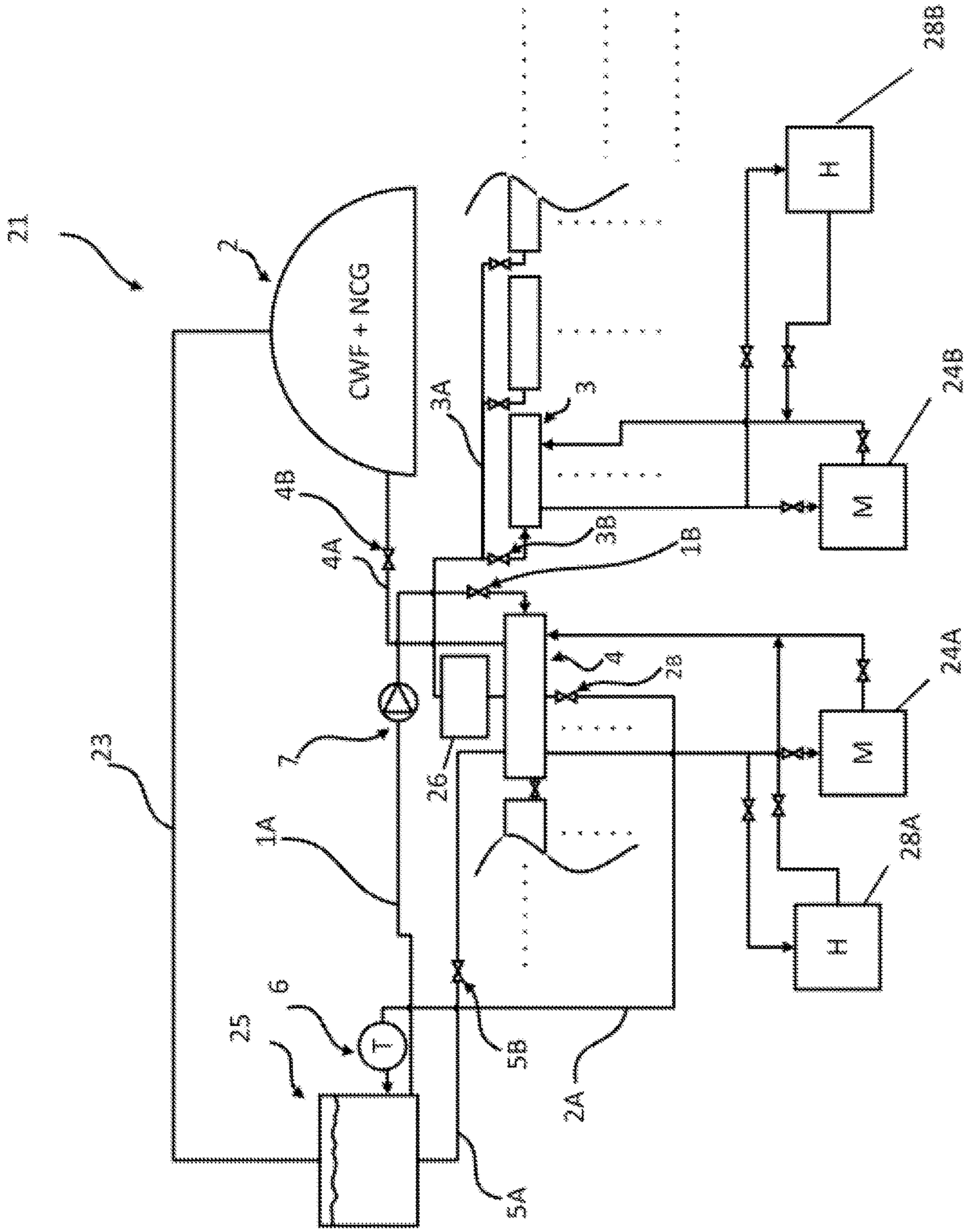


Fig. 6

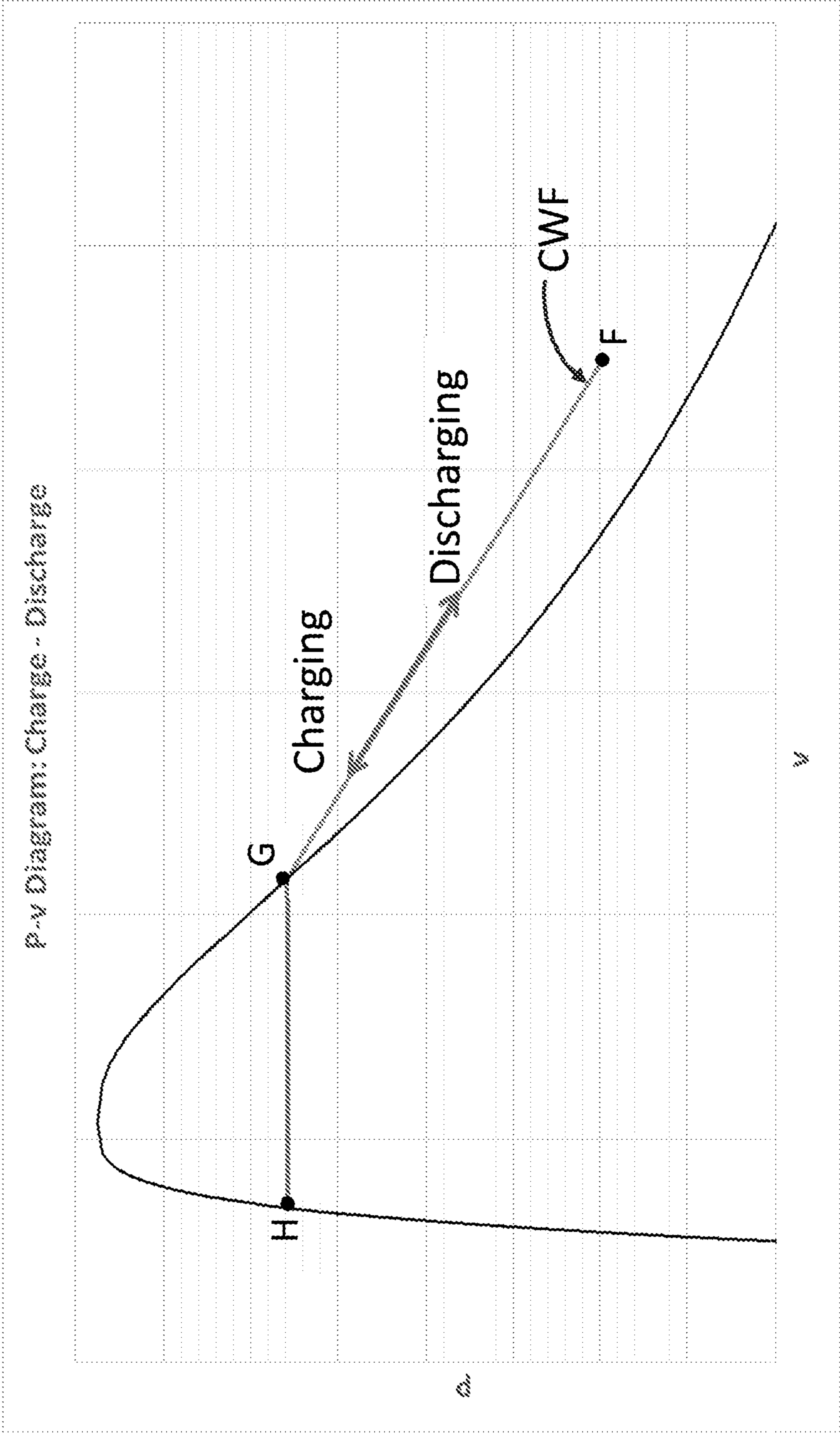


Fig. 7

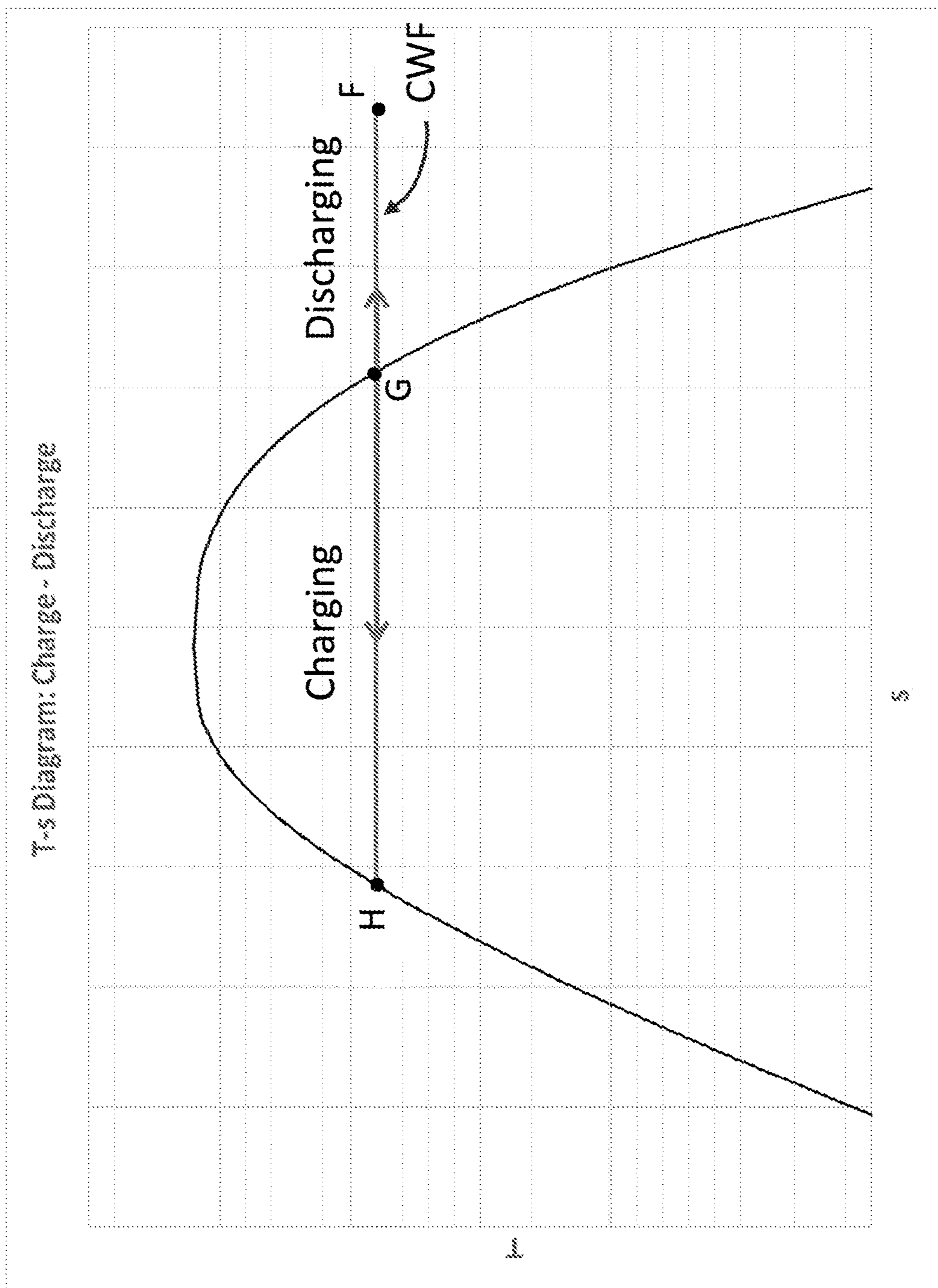


Fig. 8

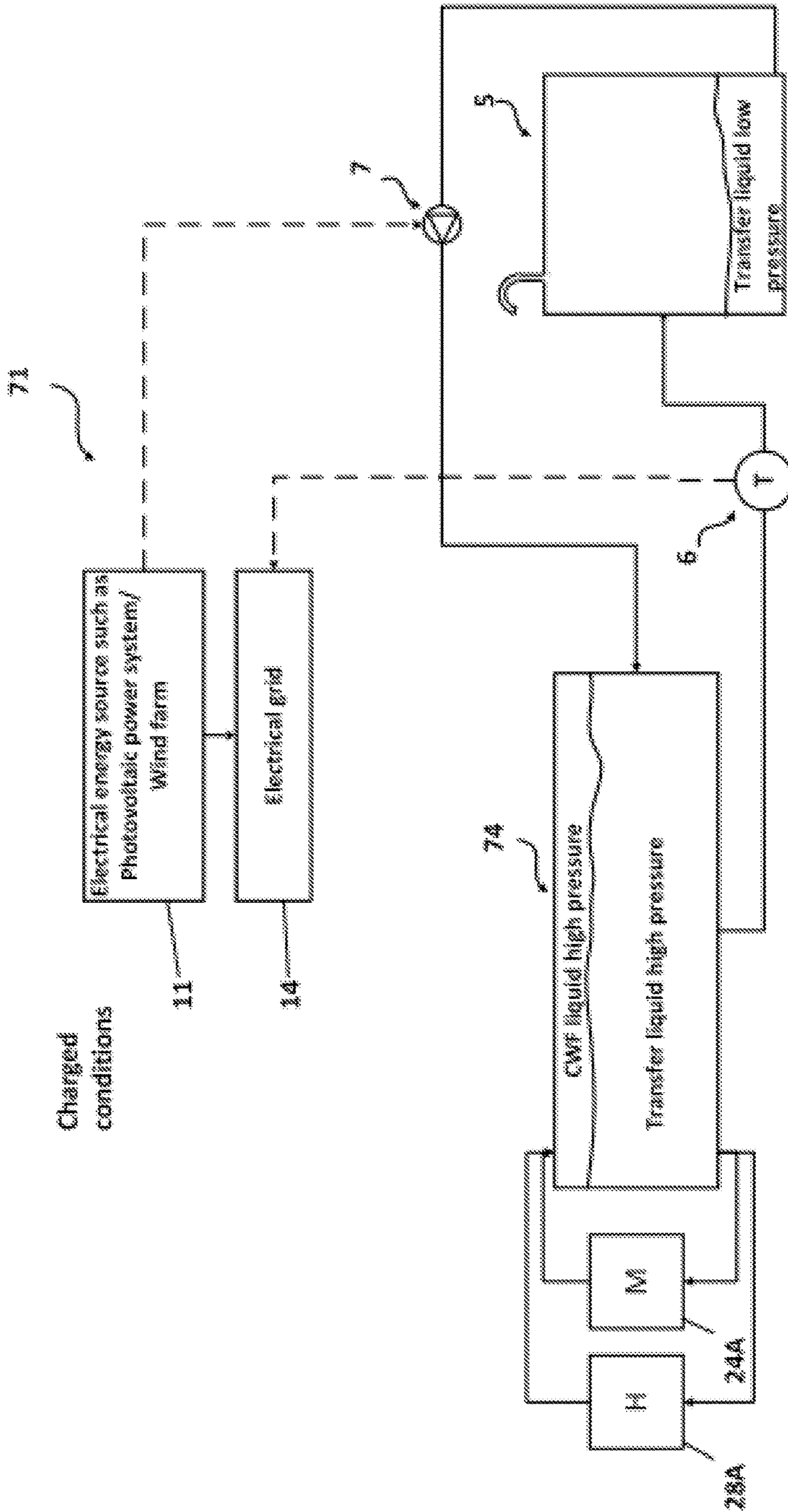


Fig. 9

ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM AND METHOD

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of mechanical energy storage. More particularly, the invention relates to an energy storage system from which compressed gas is releasable for later use and a method therefor.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Energy collected from various sustainable energy sources such as wind, solar and wave energy sources is known to be stored in the form of compressed gas. During periods of power demand, the compressed gas is discharged from the storage vessel and electrical power is able to be generated. Alternatively, the stored compressed gas can be utilized in different industrial applications.

Many compressed air energy storage (CAES) systems are known in the prior art. Compressed air has traditionally been stored in large and costly underground caverns or in underwater elastic balloons. Although CAES plants have a large power rating and storage capacity, they have some major drawbacks. Firstly, air has a significantly great heat of compression, suffering from a heat loss of approximately 85% when compressed. Less compressed air is able to be stored as its temperature increases. Secondly, the pressure in the cavern within which the compressed air is stored becomes slowly reduced as additional air is released, thereby negatively influencing the amount of electricity that is able to be produced by a turbine driven by the released compressed air.

Attempts have been made to reduce the heat of compression by charging and discharging air isothermally; however, the need of employing heat exchangers to facilitate the isothermal compression unnecessarily adds costs to a storage facility.

In other CAES systems, diabatic (D-CAES), adiabatic (A-CAES), and liquid (LAES) air energy storage means have been employed. The air temperature for these prior art systems significantly deviates from ambient temperature, and therefore these prior art systems also require the use of expensive heat exchangers and rotating equipment, i.e. compressors and gas turbines.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a compressed gas energy storage system with increased energy density relative to prior art systems.

It is an additional object of the present invention to provide a compressed gas energy storage system with increased system round trip efficiency relative to prior art systems.

It is an additional object of the present invention to provide a compressed gas energy storage system and method that have reduced capital and operating costs relative to the prior art.

Other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent as the description proceeds.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A multiphase energy storage system comprises at least one pressure vessel that is exposed to ambient temperatures and that is adapted to contain a condensable working fluid (CWF) which is condensable at ambient temperatures; a liquid reservoir in fluid communication with one of said at least one pressure vessel and containing a liquid that is unvaporizable in said liquid reservoir and in said at least one

pressure vessel; and means for delivering the unvaporizable liquid from said liquid reservoir to said one of said at least one pressure vessel, wherein the CWF is compressible within said one of said at least one pressure vessel upon direct contact with the unvaporizable liquid and is storable in a liquid state after being compressed to its saturation pressure and condensed.

It is understood that the "unvaporizable liquid" may be able to be vaporized when subjected to other conditions. Under the conditions imposed by the multiphase energy storage system, and particularly by the liquid reservoir and the at least one pressure vessel, the liquid, which may also be referred to as a "transfer liquid" is unvaporizable.

The CWF is preferably substantially isothermally compressible and expandable during direct contact with the unvaporizable liquid within said one of said at least one pressure vessel.

The CWF within said one of said at least one pressure vessel is continuously and additionally compressed while additional unvaporizable liquid is being introduced to said one of said at least one pressure vessel.

The energy storage system preferably further comprises at least one hydraulic turbine which is drivable by the unvaporizable liquid, wherein at least a portion of the unvaporizable liquid located within said one of said at least one pressure vessel is propellable towards said at least one hydraulic turbine by the compressed CWF. The unvaporizable liquid discharged from the at least one hydraulic turbine is receivable in the liquid reservoir.

In one aspect, the delivering means is at least one hydraulic pump for delivering the unvaporizable liquid from the liquid reservoir to said one of said at least one pressure vessel. The energy storage system may further comprise at least one additional hydraulic pump for delivering the unvaporizable liquid from said one of said at least one pressure vessel to the liquid reservoir.

In one embodiment, the at least one pressure vessel includes first and second pressure vessels in fluid communication with each other, wherein said second pressure vessel is exposed to ambient temperatures, the system further comprising a gas source in fluid communication with said first pressure vessel and containing the CWF, the CWF being feedable from said gas source to said first pressure vessel, wherein the CWF is compressible within, and transferable from, said first pressure vessel upon direct contact with the unvaporizable liquid and is storable in a liquid state within said second pressure vessel after being transferred thereto and being compressed to its saturation pressure and condensed.

The CWF within the first pressure vessel is continuously and additionally compressed while additional unvaporizable liquid is being introduced to the first pressure vessel.

The energy storage system preferably further comprises at least one hydraulic turbine which is drivable by the unvaporizable liquid, wherein at least a portion of the unvaporizable liquid located within the first pressure vessel is propellable towards said at least one hydraulic turbine by the compressed CWF upon release from the second pressure vessel. The unvaporizable liquid discharged from the at least one hydraulic turbine is receivable in the liquid reservoir.

In one aspect, the delivering means is at least one hydraulic pump for delivering the unvaporizable liquid from the liquid reservoir to the first pressure vessel. The energy storage may further comprise at least one additional hydraulic pump for delivering the unvaporizable liquid from the first pressure vessel to the liquid reservoir.

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In one aspect, the energy storage system further comprises a liquid-gas separator and/or a liquid-liquid separator located between the first and second pressure vessels for preventing flow of the unvaporizable liquid to the second pressure vessel.

In one aspect, the first pressure vessel is also exposed to ambient temperatures.

In one aspect, the energy storage system comprises a plurality of the first pressure vessels, wherein all of the first pressure vessels, or selected first pressure vessels, are in fluid communication with each other. Alternatively, none of the plurality of first pressure vessels are in fluid communication with each other.

In one aspect, the energy storage system comprises a plurality of the second pressure vessels, wherein all of the second pressure vessels, or selected second pressure vessels, are in fluid communication with each other. Alternatively, none of the plurality of second pressure vessels are in fluid communication with each other.

A method for producing power with stored gas energy comprises the steps of substantially isothermally compressing, within at least one pressure vessel that is exposed to ambient temperatures, a CWF that is condensable at ambient temperatures during direct contact with an unvaporizable liquid, introducing additional unvaporizable liquid to one of said at least one pressure vessel until the CWF is condensed to produce liquid CWF, propelling at least some of the unvaporizable liquid located in said one of said at least one pressure vessel by the CWF towards at least one hydraulic turbine, and rotatably driving said at least one hydraulic turbine by the propelled unvaporizable liquid to produce power.

In one embodiment, the at least one pressure vessel includes first and second pressure vessels in fluid communication with each other, wherein said second pressure vessel is exposed to ambient temperatures, the method further comprising the steps of causing at least a portion of the compressed CWF to be transferred from said first pressure vessel to said second pressure vessel, and causing the CWF within said second pressure vessel to be compressed and condensed to its saturation pressure following introduction of a sufficient additional volume of the unvaporizable liquid to said first pressure vessel.

A direct contact fluid transfer (DCFT) module, comprising a first pressure vessel having at least four ports with each of which a corresponding conduit is in fluid communication, a second pressure vessel exposed to ambient temperatures which has one or more ports, and a flow control component operatively connected to each of said corresponding conduits for selectively controlling the flow therethrough of a fluid, wherein a condensable working fluid (CWF) which is condensable at ambient temperatures is introducible to said first pressure vessel through a first port of said at least four ports, wherein an unvaporizable liquid is introducible to said first pressure vessel through a second port of said at least four ports to cause substantially isothermal compression of the CWF upon direct contact with the unvaporizable liquid, wherein, following introduction of a sufficient additional volume of the unvaporizable liquid to said first pressure vessel, at least a portion of the compressed CWF is transferable from said first pressure vessel through a third port of said at least four ports to said second pressure vessel through one of said one or more ports upon direct contact with the unvaporizable liquid and is storable in a liquid state within said second pressure vessel after being compressed to its saturation pressure and condensed, wherein at least some of the unvaporizable liquid located in said first pressure vessel

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is propellable through a fourth port of said at least four ports by the CWF, when discharged from said second pressure vessel, to discharge stored energy.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the drawings:

FIG. 1 is a schematic illustration of an embodiment of a multiphase energy storage system;

FIG. 2 is a schematic illustration of another embodiment of a multiphase energy storage system;

FIG. 3 is a flow chart representing various steps that are involved during the performance of a cycle of the charging mode, according to one embodiment;

FIG. 4 is a method for delivering gas by suction driven flow;

FIG. 5 is a flow chart representing various steps that are involved in the performance of the discharging mode, according to one embodiment;

FIG. 6 is a schematic illustration of another embodiment of a multiphase energy storage system;

FIG. 7 is an exemplary pressure-volume diagram for the energy storage system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 8 is an exemplary temperature-entropy diagram for the energy storage system of FIG. 1; and

FIG. 9 is a schematic illustration of another embodiment of a multiphase energy storage system, shown during charged conditions.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Significant heat losses experienced by the working fluid of prior art systems are advantageously avoided in the multiphase compressed gas energy storage system of the present invention by employing a condensable working fluid (CWF) that is normally gaseous but which condenses at ambient temperatures when being sufficiently compressed. In conjunction with the CWF, a liquid based direct contact fluid transfer (DCFT) module is employed to ensure that the CWF will undergo phase changes, whether in a charging mode or a discharging mode, substantially isothermally. The DCFT module is operable in conjunction with a transfer liquid that is ensured in remaining in a liquid state, and therefore relatively inexpensive hydraulic equipment interfacing with the flowing transfer liquid is advantageously able to employed, to both reduce system costs and increase the system round trip efficiency (RTE).

FIG. 1 schematically illustrates an embodiment of a multiphase energy storage system, generally indicated as **1**, that is operable in both a charging mode and a discharging mode. Two fluids interact in system **1**, the first being a multiphase CWF fluid and the second being a transfer liquid.

Multiphase energy storage system **1** comprises a gas holder **2** exposed to ambient temperatures for holding low pressure CWF gas of close to atmospheric pressure. Gas holder **2** is an inexpensive large-volume container, such as one delimited by a low strength membrane. In addition, system **1** comprises one or more compression tanks **4**, constituting at least a part of the DCFT module, in fluid communication with gas holder **2**, and one or more storage tanks **3** exposed to ambient temperatures and in fluid communication with each compression tank **4**, for storing liquid CWF of high energy density at the end of the charging mode. The one or more compression tanks **4** may also be, non-limitingly, exposed to ambient temperatures. The one or more storage tanks **3** and compression tanks **4** are preferably

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pressure vessels that can withstand the relatively high pressure of compressed CWF gas. The transfer liquid, such as hydraulic oil or water, when held in liquid reservoir 5 may be exposed to air at atmospheric pressure and temperature to ensure that the transfer liquid will be maintained in liquid phase. Liquid reservoir 5 is in fluid communication with each compression tank 4 and also with hydraulic supply pump 7 and hydraulic turbine 6 used for exploiting the stored gas energy in the discharging mode. The transfer liquid is optionally immiscible with the CWF fluid.

As shown in FIG. 2, costs for operating multiphase energy storage system 1 may be reduced by powering supply pump 7 as well as a return pump, if used, during the charging mode with electrical energy generated from a renewable energy source 11, such as a photovoltaic power system or a wind farm, or from any other energy source such as a power plant. The electrical power produced by renewable energy source 11 is generally supplied to electrical grid 14. When the power demand is lower than the power produced by the renewable energy source, the excess power can be delivered to the pumps to charge the system. An excess amount of electrical power produced by renewable energy source 11 may be used to power the supply and return pumps. Likewise, the electrical power produced by a generator coupled to hydraulic turbine 6 may be supplied to electrical grid 14. The system may also be powered by other means well known to those skilled in the art under certain conditions.

FIG. 6 illustrates another embodiment of a multiphase energy storage system, generally indicated as 21. System 21 is similar to system 1, and is configured with additional apparatus, such that each different component, such as gas discharge conduit 23, mixing equipment 24, liquid-gas separator 26, and heat exchanger 28, constitutes a further embodiment that provides advantageous features. With respect to energy storage system 21, liquid reservoir 25 is not exposed to the surrounding air, but rather is in fluid communication with gas holder 2 by gas discharge conduit 23, allowing any gas that has been de-gassed from the transfer liquid, after having been absorbed therein during the charging mode or discharging mode, to flow in return to the gas holder by a closed conduit circuit arrangement. The transfer liquid remains unvaporizable under the given thermodynamic conditions of the charging mode and discharging mode whereby the pressure of the transfer liquid is significantly higher than its saturation pressure for the controlled temperature range.

FIG. 9 illustrates another embodiment of a multiphase energy storage system, generally indicated as 71. The cost effective system 71 comprises a single compression tank 74 exposed to atmospheric temperatures within which CWF is retained and is able to be condensed while being directly contacted by the unvaporizable transfer liquid, without need of a storage tank. Liquid reservoir 5 adapted to receive the transfer liquid is exposed to atmospheric air and pressure, and is in liquid communication with the liquid feed conduit to which hydraulic pump 7 is operatively connected and with the turbine inlet conduit to which hydraulic turbine 6 is operatively connected. System 71 may also interface with renewable energy source 11 and electrical grid 14, as described with respect to FIG. 2.

A supplementary gas tank (not shown) may be used to inject a supplementary amount of gas to a compression tank or to a gas holder if the current mass of gas retained in system 1 of FIG. 1 or system 71 of FIG. 9 is less than a minimal value needed for an efficacious operation for producing power from stored gas energy.

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Charging Mode

Initially, with reference to multiphase energy storage system 71 of FIG. 9, the transfer liquid is retained in liquid reservoir 5, low-pressure CWF is retained in compression tank 74 and all valves are closed. After the liquid feed valve is opened and supply pump 7 is activated, transfer liquid is delivered to compression tank 74. The introduced transfer liquid reduces the available volume within compression tank 74 that the CWF is able to occupy, causing the CWF to become compressed. As additional transfer liquid is introduced, the CWF becomes increasingly compressed until its pressure is increased above its saturation pressure and condenses. The CWF is compressed substantially isothermally as a result of the direct contact with the transfer liquid. Upon conclusion of the charging mode, the liquid feed valve is closed and the supply pump is deactivated.

In pre-charging conditions with reference to system 1 of FIG. 1 and system 21 of FIG. 6, the CWF is retained in gas holder 2 in gas phase, being at atmospheric pressure or a pressure slightly thereabove, the transfer liquid is retained in liquid reservoir 5, and the one or more storage tanks 3 are precompressed with gas, and the one or more compression tanks 4 are filled with atmospheric gas or are filled with the transfer liquid.

If the one or more compression tanks 4 are filled with transfer liquid, the procedure described in relation to FIG. 4 is performed to urge delivery of the transfer liquid to liquid reservoir 5 while gas flows from gas holder 2 to one or more compression tanks 4.

When there is a sufficient volume of gas within the one or more compression tanks 4, the isolation valve 3B at the at least one port to each storage tank 3 is opened, to provide a combined interior volume that is common to each compression tank 3 and storage tank 4 via terminal conduit 3A extending therebetween. The gaseous CWF flows from each compression tank 4 through terminal conduit 3A is received in a storage tank 3 after flowing through isolation valve 3B without being discharged therefrom. If there are more than one storage tank 3, the gaseous CWF flows in parallel through a corresponding isolation valve 3B and port to the storage tank, although not all isolation valves 3B may be open at the same time.

Following introduction of a first portion of the CWF gas to the one or more tanks 3 and 4, liquid feed valve 1B operatively connected to a region of liquid feed conduit 1A extending from liquid reservoir 5 to the one or more compression tanks 4 that is downstream to supply pump 7 which is also operatively connected to liquid feed conduit 1A is opened. Hydraulic supply pump 7 is activated, and is caused to deliver the transfer liquid from reservoir 5 to the one or more compression tanks 4.

The transfer liquid that is being introduced to the one or more compression tanks 4 reduces the combined volume of tanks 3 and 4 that is occupied by the CWF gas. Consequently the CWF gas is able to be compressed within the interior of a compression tank 4. As more transfer liquid is introduced to the one or more compression tanks 4, the combined volume of tanks 3 and 4 that is occupied by the CWF gas is reduced and the CWF in both gas tanks 3 and 4 becomes additionally compressed. During compression, the CWF gas is directly contacted and cooled by the transfer liquid to reduce the heat of compression, such that the CWF gas is able to undergo compression at a substantially constant temperature. Eventually, the one or more compression tanks 4 are completely occupied by the transfer liquid while the CWF gas that was formerly in the one or more compression tanks 4 is displaced to the one or more storage tanks 3,

causing the CFW gas within the one or more storage tanks **3** to be further compressed. The CWF received in the one or more storage tanks **3** liquefies once it is compressed to at least saturation pressure. All valves are then closed to complete a cycle of the charging mode.

If the pressure of the CWF received in the one or more storage tanks **3** is less than saturation pressure, additional cycles of the charging mode may be performed. During each additional cycle, another gas portion is fed to a compression tank **4** to increase the pressure of the stored CWF fluid.

FIG. **3** illustrates various steps that are involved in the performance of a cycle of the charging mode in conjunction with system **1** of FIG. **1** and system **21** of FIG. **6**, according to one embodiment.

To initiate an additional cycle of the charging mode, or alternatively a first cycle thereof, when the one or more compression tanks **4** is filled with the transfer liquid in step **29**, return valve **5B** operatively connected to another conduit **5A** extending from liquid reservoir **5** to the one or more compression tanks **4**, i.e. the return conduit, is opened in step **31** to cause the transfer liquid to be delivered from the one or more compression tanks **4** in return to reservoir **5**. At the same time, gas feed valve **4B** is momentarily opened to cause flow of a gas portion from the gas holder **2** to the one or more compression tanks **4**.

All valves are closed once the transfer liquid has returned to reservoir **5**. Afterwards, each isolation valve **3B** is opened in step **36**. Supply pump **7** is then activated in step **37** to supply the one or more compression tanks **4** with transfer liquid, so that the CWF gas that has been fed from the gas holder to the one or more compression tanks **4** in the current cycle will be compressed in step **39** and subsequently displaced in step **41** to the one or more storage tanks **3** by the transfer liquid. The introduction of additional CWF gas to the one or more storage tanks **3** increases the pressure of the stored CWF gas in step **43**. Eventually after one or more cycles, the pressure of the ambient-temperature CWF received in the one or more storage tanks **3** increases to the saturation pressure and then liquefies in step **45**.

If the one or more compression tanks **4** is filled with gas in step **35**, the charging mode cycle proceeds to step **36**.

In another embodiment, gas is fed to the one or more compression tanks via the gas feed valve in step **33** and steps **37** and **39** are performed to compress the fed gas within the one or more compression tanks while the isolation valve at the inlet port of each storage tank is closed to increase the pressure that is building up in a compression tank. After an isolation valve is then opened, the compressed fluid is displaced by the transfer liquid to a storage tank. The displaced fluid may be in a gaseous state or a two-phase liquid-vapor state, undergoing first stage compression in a compression tank and second stage compression in a storage tank until completely liquefying.

In another embodiment shown in FIG. **4**, a portion of gas is drawn from the gas holder by suction, if for example the pressure differential between the gas holder and compression tank is relatively low. Such suction driven flow is made possible when the one or more compression tanks are filled with transfer liquid in step **31**. While the gas feed valve is opened, the return pump operatively connected to the return conduit extending between the one or more compression tanks and the reservoir is activated in step **44**. The flow of the transfer liquid through the return conduit in the direction of the reservoir generates a suction that draws gas from the gas holder to the one or more compression tanks in step **48**.

The volume of CWF fluid at a given pressure that can be stored when in a liquid state is significantly smaller than

when provided in a gaseous state, and therefore the ability of systems **1**, **21** and **71** to store the CWF in a liquid state significantly increases the energy density, i.e. the potential stored energy per volume, of the working fluid relative to the prior art practice of storing the working fluid in a gaseous state. The energy density achievable by the CWF is also able to be advantageously increased by virtue of the substantially isothermal compression and expansion, which results in reduced heat loss. The capital cost of the small-volume storage tanks **3** is substantially less than the large-volume storage tanks that are needed to store compressed gas in a gaseous state.

The energy density of the fluid stored in the one or more storage tanks **3** may be additionally increased, as shown in system **21** of FIG. **6**, when gas holder **2** contains an additional low-pressure gas which is a non-CWF but which is mixable with the CWF, such as air or a non-condensable gas (NCG). This mixture is compressed in step **39** and transferred to the one or more storage tanks in step **41**. After the CWF is liquefied in step **45**, the non-CWF gas is able to be additionally compressed, such as in response the introduction of an additional volume of the transfer liquid to a compression tank **4**, to further increase the energy density of the stored fluid. It will be appreciated that a non-CWF may also be mixed with the CWF to increase the energy density of the stored compressed fluid in systems **1** and **71**.

The high energy density of the CWF received in the one or more storage tanks **3** is advantageous since more energy is able to be released from the stored CWF in the discharging mode.

With reference to multiphase energy storage system **21** schematically illustrated in FIG. **6** according to another embodiment, the energy density of the CWF transferred to a storage tank **3** is able to be further increased by preventing the flow of the transfer liquid into each storage tank, so that more CWF is able to occupy a storage tank interior and to be condensed. The flow of transfer liquid into a storage tank may be prevented by deploying a liquid-gas separator **26**, or a liquid-liquid separator when the CWF condenses as well within a compression tank, at the inlet of the storage tank port. Liquid-gas separator **26** may be for example one that forces the transfer liquid to fall under the influence of gravity within the liquid-gas separator and return to a compression tank **4**. Liquid-gas separator **26** may also be embodied by a buffer tank located above the height of each compression tank **4**. Liquid-gas separator **26** or a liquid-liquid separator may be operatively connected to conduit **27**, which extends from a dedicated outlet provided with a corresponding compression tank **4** to terminal conduit **3A** with which it is in fluid communication.

Despite the lack of direct contact between the transfer liquid and the CFW fluid within the one or more storage tanks **3** when systems **1** and **21** employ a liquid-gas separator **26**, the CFW is able to be isothermally compressed as a result of the cooling effect provided by the ambient-temperature air or ground surrounding the one or more storage tanks **3**. Additionally, the heat of compression is able to be reduced or altogether eliminated when the CFW is slowly compressed, for example on the order of several hours.

Alternatively or additionally, as schematically illustrated in multiphase energy storage systems **21** of FIGS. **6** and **71** of FIG. **9**, isothermal compression may be ensured by means of mixing equipment. A unit **24B** of mixing equipment set in fluid communication with a corresponding storage tank **3** may be activated when the CWF starts to liquefy, such as when achieving a two-phase liquid-vapor state. The liquid and vapor portions of the CWF will be able to be mixed

together to eliminate temperature gradients within the stored CWF by providing a fluid with a substantially uniform temperature and heat transfer coefficient, and also absorbing any released heat of compression. Unit **24B** may be activated in response to the detection of a predetermined pressure within the corresponding storage tank **3** or the detection of the presence of liquid, by a relevant sensor. Likewise a unit **24A** of mixing equipment, which may be identical to or different from unit **24B**, may be set in fluid communication with a corresponding compression tank **4**.

The mixing equipment may assume various forms. The mixing equipment, such as an agitator, may be rotatably mounted with the corresponding tank. An agitator provides homogeneity of the stored fluid in terms of temperature, heat transfer coefficient, as well as in terms of composition to mix any particles that may have settled out of the compressed liquefied solution.

The mixing equipment may also be deployed externally to the corresponding tank. In one embodiment, the mixing equipment is configured with a set of conduits and nozzles, whereby a fluid portion at one region of the tank is bled through one of the conduits, such as in conjunction with a pump, and is injected to another region of the tank through one or more nozzles. This arrangement may also facilitate circulation of the transfer liquid between two or more of the compression tanks **4**, which may be interconnected, or from one or more of the compression tanks **4** to one or more of the storage tanks **3**, which may also be interconnected.

Also, a heat exchanger **28A** set in heat exchanger relation with the one or more compression tanks **4** or a heat exchanger **28B** set in heat exchanger relation with the one or more storage tanks **3** may be provided to assist in achieving isothermal compression. Each of the heat exchangers may be of the shell and tube type, finned tube type, plate heat exchanger type, air cooled type, or any other heat exchanger type well known to those skilled in the art. The tubes through which the cooling medium flows, when employed, may be shared with the conduits associated with the mixing equipment, such as when one or more valves are selectively opened and/or closed to permit flow to a heat exchanger or to a mixing equipment unit. More than one heat exchanger may be employed, and each one may be of the same type or of a different type.

Discharging Mode

The condensed CWF is able to remain stored for a prolonged period of time while being subjected to the charged conditions until the discharging mode is initiated. The discharging mode is generally initiated during peak demand or during periods when there is a shortage in energy availability as the energy stored in the multiphase energy storage system is able to be discharged whenever desired and to produce electricity supplied to the grid.

During the discharge mode, transfer liquid is propelled by high-pressure liquid CWF towards the hydraulic turbine in order to produce electricity. By using a transfer liquid for causing compression of the CWF during the charging mode and for being propelled by the CWF during the discharging mode, a hydraulic turbine may advantageously be employed to produce power, as opposed to a gas turbine used by prior art compressed gas storage systems. Advantages of the use of a hydraulic turbine relative to a gas turbine include higher efficiencies, lower rotational speeds, easier maintainability and lower running costs.

These advantages are also relevant to the use of a hydraulic pump by the multiphase energy storage system as opposed to the use of a compressor for introducing compressed gas by a prior art compressed gas storage system.

Referring now to multiphase energy storage system **71** of FIG. **9**, CWF liquid and high-pressure transfer liquid are retained within compression tank **74** in anticipation of the subsequent initiation of the discharging mode. Since the CWF fluid has been compressed to its saturation pressure, which is significantly greater than its pressure during pre-charging conditions, and transfer liquid is retained in the same closed compression tank **74** as the CWF liquid, the CWF liquid applies a force onto the transfer liquid that causes the transfer liquid to be pressurized to the same saturation pressure as the CWF liquid. The pressurized transfer liquid located within compression tank **74** is at a significantly higher pressure than the atmospheric pressure to which the transfer liquid retained within liquid reservoir **5** is exposed.

When the turbine injection valve is opened to initiate the discharging mode, the high-pressure transfer liquid is urged to be discharged from compression tank **74** with sufficiently high kinetic energy to rotatably drive hydraulic turbine and produce power due to the high pressure differential between the high-pressure transfer liquid within compression tank **74** and the low-pressure transfer liquid within liquid reservoir **5**. In response to the discharge of high-pressure transfer liquid from compression tank **74**, additional volume of compression tank **74** that is unoccupied by the transfer liquid is made available to the CWF, which is consequently able to expand and to achieve a two phase vapor-liquid state. It is noted that since the multiphase CWF expands isobarically, the pressure of the CWF and of the transfer liquid pressurized thereby is unchanged, thereby allowing the power output to be continuous for a period of time. Once the CWF achieves a gaseous state, the pressure of the high-pressure transfer liquid is reduced. Nevertheless, the pressure of the propelled transfer liquid, until reduced below a turbine-specific threshold, is sufficiently high to rotatably drive hydraulic turbine **6** and to produce power. At the end of the discharging mode, the turbine injection valve is closed and the liquid feed valve is opened.

By virtue of the simplicity of system **71**, transfer liquid is able to be cycled back and forth between liquid reservoir **5** and compression tank **74** during alternate performance of the charging and discharging modes, respectively, in a similar fashion as a piston to produce additional power.

In pre-discharge conditions with reference to system **1** of FIG. **1** and system **21** of FIG. **6**, all valves are closed and the CWF fluid retained in the one or more storage tanks **3** is in liquid phase, after having been exposed to the ambient temperature of the storage tanks and been compressed to a relatively high pressure. If mixed together with the CWF fluid, non-CWF gas compressed to a higher pressure than that of the CWF liquid is also retained within the one or more storage tanks **3**.

FIG. **5** illustrates various steps that are involved in the performance of the discharging mode, according to one embodiment.

In a first step **51** of the discharging mode, return valve **5B** is momentarily opened, allowing transfer liquid received in reservoir **5** of a relatively high hydraulic head to flow through return conduit **5B** and fill the one or more compression tanks, if no transfer liquid is currently contained within any of the compression tanks **4** following the final cycle of the charging mode. Alternatively, liquid feed valve **1B** may be momentarily opened and supply pump **7** may be operated to feed a required volume of transfer liquid to the one or more compression tanks **4**. This step may be dispensed with if there is a sufficient volume of transfer liquid within the one or more compression tanks **4**. Each of the

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compression tanks may be equipped with a sensor, such as a capacitance level sensor or a float switch, to determine the presence of a predetermined level of transfer liquid, and possibly also with a pressure sensor. Return valve 1B or valve 5B is then closed to prevent return flow of the transfer liquid.

In step 53, turbine injection valve 2B and at least one storage tank isolation valve 3B are opened. The high-pressure compressed fluid including at least CWF liquid will consequently be released from a storage tank 3 in step 55 via terminal conduit 3A with which a corresponding opened isolation valve 3B is in fluid communication due to the exposure to the lower pressure in compression tank 4 and expand to a small degree. The released CWF liquid forcefully contacts the transfer liquid in step 57 within each compression tank 4 and, as a result of the pressure differential between the CWF liquid and the transfer liquid in the liquid reservoir, causes the transfer liquid to be propelled through turbine inlet conduit 2A to which turbine injection valve 2B is operatively connected. The transfer liquid is able to be propelled as long as the pressure differential between the transfer liquid that is propelled by the CWF, which is at the same pressure as the CWF, and the transfer liquid in liquid reservoir 5 downstream to the hydraulic turbine 6 is greater than a predetermined threshold. The CWF liquid is able to evaporate and achieve a two-phase liquid-vapor state while being isobarically expanded in step 59 as a result of the greater volume within the combined interior of tanks 3 and 4 that it occupies in response to the displacement of the transfer liquid. The pressure of the multiphase CWF fluid and also of the CWF when in an entirely gaseous phase is sufficiently high to continue propelling the transfer liquid through turbine inlet conduit 2A. By virtue of the direct contact between the CWF gas and the transfer liquid, a change in temperature of the CWF gas is reduced, allowing the CWF gas to expand substantially isothermally. This expansion process continues while the transfer liquid is increasingly propelled and the CWF fluid which achieves a completely gaseous state occupies an increased volume. The transfer liquid propelled through turbine inlet conduit 2A consequently rotatably drives hydraulic turbine 6 in step 61 to produce power. The transfer liquid exiting hydraulic turbine 6 flows to reservoir 5 in step 63 to increase the liquid level within the liquid reservoir. All valves are closed to complete a cycle of the discharge mode in step 65 when the volume of the transfer liquid remaining in the one or more compression tanks is less than a propelling-worthy volume. Afterwards, gas feed valve 4B is opened in step 67, causing the gas remaining in the one or more compression tanks to flow back to gas holder 2 through gas feed conduit 4A due to a pressure differential between the one or more compression tanks 4 and the gas holder 2.

Thus the use of the phase changing CWF fluid during the discharging mode does not reduce the amount of power that is able to be extracted, but rather the multiphase CWF fluid is involved in continuing to propel the transfer liquid towards the hydraulic turbine to produce an additional amount of power. This power extraction ability is in addition to the advantage provided by the condensing fluid whereby the volume of the compression and storage tanks is allowed to be reduced.

One or more cycles involving the steps above may be repeated in the discharge mode if the pressure of the fluid including at least CWF that remains in the one or more storage tanks 3 is sufficiently greater than atmospheric pressure to facilitate propulsion of the transfer liquid. That is, step 51 is performed to refill the one or more compression

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tanks 4 with transfer liquid from reservoir 5 if they have become sufficiently emptied, and then the refilled transfer liquid is propelled in step 57 by the fluid released from the one or more storage tanks. Additional cycles may be repeated until the pressure of the gas within the one or more storage tanks 3 is lowered in step 69 to a pressure below a propelling-worthy pressure at which the transfer liquid is capable of being propelled.

The sequence of the various steps of both the charging and discharging modes is able to be controlled manually upon manipulating the various flow control devices, or alternatively automatically in response to the operation of a controller. Each step may be performed in response to a timed or sensed action commanded by the controller. Through the intervention of the controller, a charging step and a discharging step may be synchronized to provide a continuous discharging operation.

By employing a large-volume gas holder 2 and by performing a plurality of charging and discharging cycles, the volume of the one or more compression tanks 4 is advantageously able to be reduced, for lower costs. Depending on the gas energy storage need, systems 1 and 21 can be scaled up or down by a change in the number or size of one or more tanks. When system 1 or system 21 comprises a plurality of storage tanks 3 and compression tanks 4, each of the storage tanks and each of the compression tanks may be interconnected. For a more efficient transfer operation, a different step may be performed simultaneously in conjunction with two different tanks. For example, liquid transfer can flow to a first compression tank 4 at the start of another discharging cycle, while at the same time in a second compression tank the liquid transfer is propelled by expanding CWF in an a different discharging step to rotatably drive the hydraulic turbine.

FIGS. 7 and 8 illustrate various exemplary thermodynamic states of the CWF fluid. At state F, CWF gas is introduced to a compression tank, for example from the gas holder, at a relatively low pressure, and the pressure of the CWF gas is steadily increased in response to the introduction of transfer liquid into the compression tank, to the saturation pressure of the CWF at state G. The CWF, after undergoing a phase change at state G to assume a two-phase fluid, is isobarically condensed until being completely liquefied to occupy a minimal volume at state H. By direct contact with the transfer liquid and influence of the surroundings, the CWF is isothermally compressed throughout the charging mode from state F to state H. These conditions are reversed when the CWF fluid is isothermally expanded throughout the discharging mode from state H to state F.

Although only a single hydraulic turbine 6 is shown in FIGS. 1, 6 and 9, it is appreciated that more than one hydraulic turbine may be employed. When the pressure of the CWF propelling the transfer liquid is sufficiently high as detected by sensors, more than one hydraulic turbine stage may be used to produce an additional amount of power. A different turbine type may be used for each stage in order to maximize efficiency with respect to the designed operating conditions of a specific stage, such as a predetermined range of pressure drop, specific speed or head. Alternatively, a plurality of turbines in parallel may be employed. A controller receiving pressure readings as detected by sensors is able to command a flow control component such as a valve at the outlet of a first stage turbine to urge delivery of the transfer liquid exiting the first stage turbine to the inlet of a second stage turbine and to rotatably drive the second stage turbine.

It will be appreciated that a plurality of supply pumps in parallel or in line may be used.

As may be appreciated by the preceding description, reduced costs and increased system-wide round trip efficiency for mechanical energy storage relative to prior art practice are able to be realized with the system of the present invention by using conventional hydraulic equipment, i.e., a hydraulic pump during the charging mode and a hydraulic turbine during the discharging mode. Cost reduction is also made possible by avoiding the need of additional thermal energy storage that is usually required by the prior art to absorb the heat of compression, since the working fluid used in the system of the present invention is advantageously able to undergo substantially isothermal compression.

While some embodiments of the invention have been described by way of illustration, it will be apparent that the invention can be carried out with many modifications, variations and adaptations, and with the use of numerous equivalents or alternative solutions that are within the scope of persons skilled in the art, without exceeding the scope of the claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A multiphase energy storage system, comprising:

- a) a first pressure vessel having at least four ports with each of which a corresponding conduit is in fluid communication;
- b) a second pressure vessel that is set to a temperature no greater than ambient temperatures and that is configured with one or more ports;
- c) a liquid reservoir in fluid communication with said first pressure vessel and containing a liquid that is unvaporizable in said liquid reservoir and in said first pressure vessel; and
- d) means for delivering the unvaporizable liquid from said liquid reservoir to said first pressure vessel, wherein a condensable working fluid (CWF) which is condensable at ambient temperatures is introducible to said first pressure vessel through a first port of said at least four ports, wherein the unvaporizable liquid is introducible by said delivering means to said first pressure vessel through a second port of said at least four ports, wherein the CWF is compressible within said first pressure vessel upon direct contact with the unvaporizable liquid, wherein, following introduction of a sufficient additional volume of the unvaporizable liquid to said first pressure vessel, at least a portion of the compressed CWF is transferable from said first pressure vessel through a third port of said at least four ports to said second pressure vessel through one of said one or more ports upon direct contact with the unvaporizable liquid and is storable in a liquid state within said second pressure vessel after being compressed to its saturation pressure and condensed, wherein at least some of the unvaporizable liquid located in said first pressure vessel is propellable through a fourth port of said at least four ports by the compressed CWF discharged from said second pressure vessel, to discharge stored energy.

2. The energy storage system according to claim 1, the system further comprising:

- e) a gas source in fluid communication with said first pressure vessel and containing the CWF, the CWF being feedable from said gas source to said first pressure vessel.

3. The energy storage system according to claim 1, further comprising at least one hydraulic turbine which is drivable by the unvaporizable liquid, wherein at least a portion of the unvaporizable liquid located within the first pressure vessel is propellable towards said at least one hydraulic turbine by the compressed CWF upon release from the second pressure vessel.

4. The energy storage system according to claim 3, wherein the unvaporizable liquid discharged from the at least one hydraulic turbine is receivable in the liquid reservoir.

5. The energy storage system according to claim 1, wherein the CWF is substantially isothermally compressible and expandable during direct contact with the unvaporizable liquid within said pressure vessel.

6. The energy storage system according to claim 1, wherein the delivering means is at least one hydraulic pump for delivering the unvaporizable liquid from the liquid reservoir to the first pressure vessel.

7. The energy storage system according to claim 6, wherein the CWF within the first pressure vessel is continuously and additionally compressed while additional unvaporizable liquid is being introduced to the first pressure vessel.

8. The energy storage system according to claim 6, further comprising at least one additional hydraulic pump for delivering the unvaporizable liquid from the first pressure vessel to the liquid reservoir.

9. The energy storage system according to claim 1, further comprising a liquid-gas separator located between the first and second pressure vessels for preventing flow of the unvaporizable liquid to the second pressure vessel.

10. The energy storage system according to claim 9, further comprising a liquid-liquid separator located between the first and second pressure vessels for preventing flow of the unvaporizable liquid to the second pressure vessel.

11. The energy storage system according to claim 1, further comprising a liquid-liquid separator located between the first and second pressure vessels for preventing flow of the unvaporizable liquid to the second pressure vessel.

12. The energy storage system according to claim 1, wherein the second pressure vessel is exposed to ambient temperatures.

13. The energy storage system according to claim 1, comprising a plurality of the first pressure vessels.

14. The energy storage system according to claim 13, wherein all of the first pressure vessels are in fluid communication with each other or selected second pressure vessels are in fluid communication with each other.

15. The energy storage system according to claim 1, comprising a plurality of the second pressure vessels.

16. The energy storage system according to claim 15, wherein all of the second pressure vessels are in fluid communication with each other or selected second pressure vessels are in fluid communication with each other.

17. A direct contact fluid transfer (DCFT) module, comprising:

- a) a first pressure vessel having at least four ports with each of which a corresponding conduit is in fluid communication;
- b) a second pressure vessel set to a temperature no greater than ambient temperatures which has one or more ports; and
- c) a flow control component operatively connected to each of said corresponding conduits for selectively controlling the flow therethrough of a fluid,

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wherein a condensable working fluid (CWF) which is condensable at ambient temperatures is introducible to said first pressure vessel through a first port of said at least four ports,

wherein an unvaporizable liquid is introducible to said first pressure vessel through a second port of said at least four ports to cause substantially isothermal compression of the CWF upon direct contact with the unvaporizable liquid,

wherein, following introduction of a sufficient additional volume of the unvaporizable liquid to said first pressure vessel, at least a portion of the compressed CWF is transferable from said first pressure vessel through a third port of said at least four ports to said second pressure vessel through one of said one or more ports upon direct contact with the unvaporizable liquid and is storable in a liquid state within said second pressure vessel after being compressed to its saturation pressure and condensed,

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wherein at least some of the unvaporizable liquid located in said first pressure vessel is propellable through a fourth port of said at least four ports by the compressed CWF discharged from said second pressure vessel, to discharge stored energy.

18. The energy storage system according to claim **2**, wherein the gas holder additionally contains a non-CWF that is mixable with the CWF, the non-CWF gas being additionally compressible following liquefaction of the CWF.

19. The energy storage system according to claim **1**, further comprising a flow control component operatively connected to each of the corresponding conduits for selectively controlling the flow therethrough of a fluid.

20. The energy storage system according to claim **12**, wherein the first pressure vessel is also exposed to ambient temperatures.

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